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Sarah Siddons as Lady Macbeth /

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SARAH SIDDONS AS LADY MACBETH

by

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ABSTRACT

Sarah Siddons created the complex character of Lady Macbeth in her masterful performances, and through her creative interpretation, fulfilled an ideal. In order to fully appreciate Mrs. Siddons' artistic contribution, it is important to view her accomplishments on stage and contrast her conception of Lady Macbeth with the efforts of other actresses.

The stage history of Lady Macbeth from 1610 to 1768 is viewed in Chapter I, which deals mainly with the performances and problems of the early actresses. Chapter II presents information about the life and career of Sarah Siddons, discussing her performances and the versions of Macbeth used, describing her interpretation of each scene. Mrs. Siddons' influence on later actresses is revealed in Chapter III.

Through the study of interpretations of Lady Macbeth, it is hoped that the relevance of the player's insight and art to understanding the play as a whole is realized. Mrs. Siddons' interpretation supports this view.

Chapter I

Although no one knows for certain the exact date when Macbeth was first performed, most authorities are willing to settle for 1605 or 1606. No one knows who first created the role of Lady Macbeth, but presumably it was a boy, or at least a male actor, since no women appeared on the English stage previous to the Restoration.

The only information about the stage history of Macbeth prior to the Restoration is found in the notes of Simon Forman, who observed a performance of Macbeth at the Globe, on April 20, 1611. His brief comments about Macbeth are recorded in his notes in his Bocke of Plaies (1611), a manuscript now in the Bodleian Library.[1] In these notes little is said about Lady Macbeth except that she confessed all as she walked and talked in her sleep, and earlier in the play, following Duncan's murder, she and Macbeth scrubbed their hands but were unable to remove the blood. This action may be taken literally or metaphorically; in either case, the effect of the crime was evidently clearly transmitted to the audience.

It is possible that the part of Lady Macbeth was performed by a popular, young boy-actor named, John Rice. Shakespeare's close associate, Richard Burbage, well-known actor and theatre owner, and Rice had ap-

peared together in a pageant in May of 1610, at which time Rice had played a female role. Both Rice and Burbage were considered excellent actors of the time, although different types. Rice, described as fair and attractive, had performed in other female roles, and it is quite possible that he was the Lady Macbeth seen by Forman in the 1611 performance.[2]

During the Restoration Period with the reopening of the theatres, the Elizabethan tradition of boys playing the female roles faded away as women appeared on stage. In his diary, a frequent theatre-goer, Samuel Pepys, secretary to the navy and president of the Royal Society, mentions the novelty of seeing women perform upon the stage for the first time, in his entry of January 3, 1661.[3]

Shakespeare's plays were rewritten by William Davenant during the Restoration and performed by the actors of the time. The most popular Davenant adaptation was Macbeth, possibly because Macbeth could be easily adapted to the musical performances that were prevalent in the 1660's. The emphasis was no longer focused on the sensitivity of the Macbeths' responses and reactions when caught in evil, but on the spectacle presented by the singing, dancing, and comical witches.

Unlike earlier and later versions of Macbeth, Davenant's version had Lady Macduff accompany Lady

Macbeth upon her entrance; later in the act, having welcomed the king, Lady Macbeth converses briefly with Macduff discussing Lady Macduff's health. The fainting scene following Macbeth's confession of killing the grooms is retained with Lady Macbeth responding, "Oh, Oh, Oh!"[4] Her appearance in this scene was deleted in Garrick's 1743 version and in Kemble's 1794 version (see n. 20, and Chapter II, n. 16, infra).

Although Davenant's text changed Lady Macbeth's part far less than that of Macbeth in the first three acts, a whole new scene is added in the fourth act in which Duncan's ghost appears twice to Lady Macbeth while Macbeth looks on.[5]

In Davenant's adaptation many of the imaginative passages of Shakespeare were deleted, and the sensuous images and colorful allusions necessary to the play were limited. References to blood or bloodshed and all unpleasant images were removed, such as the stabbing of Macduff's son or Macduff's bearing the usurper's head. The result was that the Davenant adaptation was neat, stiff, and formal; and this was what was desired by the people, who thought the adaptations were great improvements over the original versions, in the age of elegance and refinement.

During this age much was made of the male actors, but little information is known about the actresses.

Their involvement in the performances is mentioned seldom, if at all. While Thomas Betterton's popularity was widespread as a Shakespearian actor of the day, and he received praise from many, including Pepys,[6] little attention is given the praise-worthy performances of his wife, Mary Sanderson Betterton,[7] who is the first known actress to play Lady Macbeth on the London stage.

Mrs. Betterton performed Shakespearian roles prior to her marriage to Betterton in 1663, and continued her performances until her death in 1712.[8] Colley Cibber, an actor who worked with Betterton and criticized his acting ability, praises Mrs. Betterton's outstanding performance as Lady Macbeth.[9] According to Cibber, in this part Mrs. Betterton had the ability to delight her audiences by creating terror and awe as a person with a disordered and guilty mind.[10]

In addition to Mrs. Betterton, another actress of the seventeenth century who performed as Lady Macbeth opposite Thomas Betterton was Mrs. Elizabeth Barry. Mrs. Barry had a strong, melodic voice, according to Cibber, which suggested "violence of passion," but failed to produce the "strokes of terror" Mrs. Betterton had produced.[11]

Although she qualified as a distinguished tragedienne, Mrs. Barry has been accused with other actresses of her time of "listening to her own voice."[12] Speaight

says that "Mrs. Barry was so habituated to blank verse that she rose in a delirium from her death bed to chant it."[13] But Cibber said, "while she was impetuous and terrible she pour'd out the Sentiment with enchanting Harmony,"[14] which might indicate Mrs. Barry's ability combined acting with feeling with a recitation of poetry, in performing as Lady Macbeth.

Both Mrs. Betterton and Mrs. Barry were somewhat limited by the Davenant adaptation they used and the stuffy traditions of the period that affected performances of Shakespeare's tragedy; however, Mrs. Barry and Mrs. Betterton appear to have had the special dramatic and lyrical genius which distinguished their identity as performers in the later 17th century. Those actors and actresses who followed between 1710 and 1744, with the exception of Mrs. Porter, failed to achieve such identity.[15]

In 1736, Mrs. Porter performed as Lady Macbeth with distinction at Drury Lane. Mrs. Porter, trained by Betterton, was ineffectual as a commedienne, but had an imagination that was set ablaze by tragedy.[16] Like Betterton she was restrained, but capable of passion; her acting was disciplined but vivid. Although she performed in a graceful and dignified manner, she had the enthusiasm to arouse the feelings of the audience. She too used the Davenant version of Macbeth, but per-

formed as Lady Macbeth in an astonishingly effective manner with a talent that all other actors of her time lacked.[17] Charles Macklin, who played Macbeth in 1773, preferred Mrs. Porter's acting to that of her successor, Mrs. Pritchard, who played opposite David Garrick, the actor who became famous for his performance of Macbeth in 1744.[18]

Davenant's text was used until David Garrick introduced his own version of Macbeth, which was first performed in January of 1744. Out of respect to Shakespeare's words and quality, Garrick attempted to restore Shakespeare's plays to their original form.[19] The new adaptations and Garrick's interpretations led to his popularity and, in all probability, affected the success of Mrs. Hannah Pritchard.

Although Garrick did restore many of the scenes, and his own version came closer than Davenant's to that of Shakespeare, Garrick was not completely faithful to the original text.[20] He, too, deleted scenes, such as that of the drunken porter, and Lady Macbeth's fainting scene; he substituted words and added lines, possibly all in the hope of improvement. An example was Garrick's attempt to improve the part of Macbeth in the final scene. After receiving his death wound on stage (V.ix.), Garrick recited a dying speech, in which he demonstrated realization of his errors and regret for his crimes, as

well as providing the audience with visible retribution for his sins.[21]

Garrick's alterations pleased many members of the audience, but shocked others, especially those actors who had performed the roles in Macbeth previously, thinking they had been using Shakespeare's original text.[22] Mrs. Pritchard's reputation as an actress, however, was enhanced by Garrick's innovations, as well as developed by her own ability to project a credible character in Lady Macbeth.

Although she lacked the grace and dignity of the regal Mrs. Porter, who preceded her, and the imagination and poise of Mrs. Siddons, who followed her, Mrs. Pritchard was a powerful actress of her time. In fact, according to the actor Thomas Davies, at times she was too powerful and loud, particularly in scenes depicting grief.[23]

Uneducated and unsophisticated, Mrs. Pritchard acted by instinct and received a variety of criticism; however, Garrick praised her performance as Lady Macbeth. She expressed "anger, indignation, and contempt"[24] in contrast to Garrick's kind, sensitive, and melancholy interpretation of Macbeth. Together, Mrs. Pritchard and David Garrick "achieved a balance of contrasts."[25]

The combination worked well together, and their

interpretation of the Macbeths inspired two artists, Zoffany and Fuseli, to paint the scene following Duncan's murder, as Mrs. Pritchard and David Garrick had played it at Drury Lane in the 1760's.[26]

Not everyone admired Mrs. Pritchard's acting ability, however. She was harshly criticized by the renowned critic and writer, Dr. Samuel Johnson, who commented:

> . . . her playing was quite mechanical. It is wonderful how little mind she had. Sir, she had never read the tragedy of Macbeth through. She no more thought of the play out of which her part was taken, than a shoemaker thinks of the skin out of which the piece of leather of which he is making a pair of shoes is cut.[27]

However, in Some Account of the English Stage, 1660 to 1830, a ten volume account published in 1832, the author John Genest, commenting that Mrs. Pritchard's acting was pleasing to the ear, said, "she uttered her words, as the great poet advises the actor, smoothly and trippingly from the tongue."[28]

Mrs. Pritchard played opposite Garrick for a number of years and had developed a well-known reputation as Lady Macbeth. When she retired from the stage in 1768, Garrick refused to perform Macbeth ever again.[29]

Many persons of the period, including Sarah Siddons, considered Mrs. Pritchard "the greatest Lady Macbeth within living memory,"[30] and it was with Hannah Pritchard that Sarah Siddons felt herself competing when she first

appeared as Lady Macbeth on February 2, 1785 at Drury Lane.

Chapter II

On July 5, 1755, Sarah Siddons, later to become the greatest Lady Macbeth of all time, was born, Sarah Kemble, eldest of the eleven children of Roger and Sally Kemble, an acting couple who managed a company that toured the English provinces. From an early age, Sarah and her younger brother, John, also destined to become a famous actor, appeared on stage with other members of the family.[1]

Sarah's first public appearances, in which her name appeared on the programs, were in 1767, when she performed with other members of her family in Charles The First and appeared in her first Shakespearian role as Ariel in a musical adaptation of The Tempest.

After marrying William Siddons, an actor in her father's company, Sarah and her husband left for the provinces with another acting company. While in the provinces Sarah was observed by a Mr. Bates, a self-appointed critic and friend of the great actor David Garrick, then the manager of Drury Lane Theatre in London. Upon recommendation from Bates, Garrick hired Mrs. Siddons for the season of 1775, but lacking the confidence and experience required for the London stage, she proved unsuccessful and, not being rehired for the following season, was forced to return to the provinces.

During the period that followed, while touring the

provinces, Sarah studied the part of Lady Macbeth for the first time, giving no thought to character development, merely learning her words. Alone, late at night, while reading, she was overwhelmed by the following experience:

> I went on with tolerable composure, in the silence of the night, (a night I never can forget), till I came to the assassination scene, when the horrors of the scene rose to a degree that made it impossible for me to get farther. I snatched my candle, and hurried out of the room, in a paroxysm of terror. My dress was silk, and the rustling of it, as I ascended the stairs to bed, seemed to my panic-struck fancy like the movement of a spectre pursuing me. At last I reached my chamber, where I found my husband fast asleep. I clapt my candle stick down upon the table, without the power of putting the candle out; and I threw myself on the bed, without daring to stay even to take off my clothes.[2]

Although she arose at dawn to continue to study her lines, she knew little of her part that evening. From this experience, Mrs. Siddons later claimed, she learned not to procrastinate and possibly began to realize that interpretation was more than superficial memorization of lines.

Through this experience it is also possible that Sarah Siddons may have recognized something of the terror and sublime evil she was later to communicate to her audience as the world's greatest Lady Macbeth; however, at this time, after her terrifying experience

reading the play and her unsuccessful performance, she had no desire to play the role again.

While in the provinces, Sarah was again successful in Manchester, Birmingham, Liverpool, York, and Bath, where she spent two seasons. Her popularity at Bath was widely discussed, and Richard Brinsley Sheridan, the new manager at Drury Lane, engaged her at a higher salary than she had received from Garrick.

On October 10, 1782, Sarah gave a brilliant performance of Isabella in The Fatal Marriage at Drury Lane, and her great success in London began. She had developed the skill to arouse the emotions of her audience by presenting the complex aspects of a character, with an ability praised by all. Her dark, expressive eyes aided in her interpretation and fascinated the audience who also found her voice audible and penetrating.

Sarah Siddons made her character "live." At age twenty-seven, she was praised for her acting and admired for her beauty, grace, and dignity. The King and Queen, who attended a performance in 1783, were impressed with her acting, and gave her a court appointment, a great honor, but not very lucrative. Many great men came to see Sarah Siddons perform, including Reynolds, Burke, Gibbon, and the Prince of Wales, and when her first season closed on July 5, 1783, she had given eighty performances in eight months, from a repertoire of seven

plays.

Criticized for neglecting Shakespeare's plays in her first season, Sarah triumphed as Isabella in Measure for Measure on November 3, 1783. Now joined by her brother John, who had become a powerful actor, on December 10, 1783, Sarah played Constance in King John, and her brother played John, but he was somewhat overshadowed by his sister. By the end of the season on May 13, 1784, Sarah had performed fifty-three times, in eight months, with a repertoire of twelve roles.

When she returned to Drury Lane in 1782, Sarah refused to play either Medea or Lady Macbeth, whom she considered unwomanly characters. In her Memoirs, Sarah later described her hesitation to play Lady Macbeth, "a personage with whom no one feeling of general nature was congenial or assistant [sic]."[3]

However, at age thirty, with more experience and greater maturity, Sarah reconsidered the role and chose to appear as Lady Macbeth on February 2, 1785; the performance was an extraordinary success.

Her fantastic popularity and world-wide fame established Sarah Siddons as the greatest Lady Macbeth of all time. Her audiences were fascinated by her changes of expression, her voice, her gestures, and her ability to combine majestic dignity with naturalness. With her imagination and charm, Sarah Siddons produced the char-

acter of Lady Macbeth as the role has never been performed before or since. She was praised by many, including Lord Byron, who wrote, "of Actors Cooke was the most natural, Kemble the most supernatural, Kean the medium between the two. But Mrs. Siddons was worth them all put together."[4]

Although similar to Mrs. Betterton in her manner more "natural" than other actresses who had performed the role, Mrs. Siddons produced the effect of being pathetic as well as horrifying. Mrs. Siddons' Lady Macbeth was a combination of many qualities, not the stereotype of evil or goodness. Sarah Siddons developed her character with intellectual power and "personal beauty,"[5] making Lady Macbeth a more complex and credible character.

Mrs. Siddons was noted for her grace and dignity. Her face and figure were considered beautiful by the standards of the time; and her eyes were described as brilliant, piercing, and expressive. All of these qualities helped to create a Lady Macbeth, both beautiful and evil, who fascinated Macbeth and the audience at Drury Lane and Covent Garden in over sixty performances of Macbeth between 1785 and 1812.

For her farewell performance on June 29, 1812, Mrs. Siddons chose Macbeth; the performance ended with the sleep-walking scene and, having changed her attire, she

returned to the stage to recite a farewell poem written by her nephew, Horace Twiss.

Mrs. Siddons was urged to return to the stage by a committee formed to persuade her, but appeared only in incidental appearances after 1812. She performed as Lady Macbeth on June 11, 1813 at Covent Garden in a benefit for her brother Charles, and on November 15, 1815, she performed the role again in a benefit for his children. In 1816 she performed as Lady Macbeth at Covent Garden on June 8 and 22, "by the express desire of Princess Charlotte."[6] Her last public performance as Lady Macbeth was on June 5, 1817.

Until a year or two before her death on June 8, 1831, Mrs. Siddons held large parties at which she gave readings from Shakespeare to her guests.

Sarah Siddons was probably the greatest actress not only in Britain but "it is indeed doubtful whether in any country she has had her superior or even her equal in tragedy."[7] Professor Bell paid tribute to her acting in his notes:

> Mrs. Siddons is not before an audience. Her mind wrought up in high conception of her part, her eye never wandering, never for a moment idle, passion and sentiment continually betraying themselves. Her words are the accompaniments of her thoughts, scarcely necessary, you would imagine, to the expression, but highly raising it, and giving the full force of poetical effect.[8]

Bell also suggested that Sarah Siddons' interpretation of Lady Macbeth's character had varied somewhat, depending on her fellow actor's interpretation of Macbeth:

> A just observation that is unhappy when the part of Lady Macbeth is in the hands of a Siddons, and Macbeth an inferior actor. She then becomes not the affectionate aider of her husband's ambition, but the fell monster who tempts him to transgress, making him the mere instrument of her wild and uncontrollable ambition.[9]

The part of Macbeth had been played by William Smith in Sarah Siddons' earlier performances, 1785-1788. Smith was said "to have provided a caricature of Garrick's Macbeth,"[10] imitating his acting but lacking his power and expression. After Smith retired, in 1788, the part of Macbeth was then performed by Sarah's brother John Kemble, who at that time became the acting director at Drury Lane.

Although he was an outstanding leading man in numerous productions and his "stage adaptations dominated and set the pace for other producers,"[11] Kemble's acting has never been considered as great as his sister's. According to Odell, Kemble was "the brains, as Mrs. Siddons was the heart of the machine."[12]

Others agree that Kemble's acting was inferior to his sister's. According to Bell:

> Macbeth in Kemble's hand is only a co-operating part. I can conceive Garrick to have sunk Lady Macbeth as much as Mrs. Siddons does Macbeth, yet when you see Mrs. Siddons play this part you scarcely can believe that any acting could make her part subordinate.[13]

The text of Macbeth used by John Kemble and Sarah Siddons until 1794 was based on John Bell's 1773 edition. Kemble later revised Bell's text, and when the new Drury Lane theatre opened on April 21, 1794, Kemble's new version was used.[14]

In general, both Bell's version and Kemble's adaptation followed the First Folio text with merely a few minor changes. Hogan lists the following alterations in Bell's version:

> From Act II.iii is omitted 1-47 (the Porter). In this scene Lennox's speech, 60-67a, is inserted before 48. Lady Macbeth does not appear.
>
> Act IV.ii.30b-62,77b-end (Lady Macduff and her son) is omitted. In this scene the Messenger's speech is given to Angus. From IV.iii are omitted 61b-97a (Malcolm's description of his intemperance), and 140-59a (the cure called the King's evil).
>
> Act V.ii entire (the revolted nobles' hatred of Macbeth) is omitted.
>
> Added are two scenes of the 'Singing Witches' written by Davenant. They are the last scene of his Act II, inserted between II.iii and iv , and an abridgement of the last scene of his Act III, which follows III.v.33. Following V.vii.63 are 15 lines written by Garrick: Macbeth dies on the stage with the observation that his

'soul is clogged with blood'. For V.vii. 83-84 are substituted six new lines, also written by Garrick, in which Macduff presents Macbeth's sword to Malcolm.

Throughout there are minor omissions, and a few verbal changes, for example: I. vii.59b, 'How fail!' (for 'We fail!'); IV. i.107-9, 'Appear!' (for 'Show!'). V.v.18-19 is pointed, 'There would have been a time for such a word/ Tomorrow.--To-morrow, and to-morrow'.

A note on p. 65 of this text says that at CG 'the characters of Ross and Angus have been blended into those of Macduff and Lennox'.[15]

According to Hogan, Kemble's version was an adaptation of Bell's edition, with all of its additions and the omissions, plus the following further alterations:

In Act I.ii line 46b reads, 'The worthy Thane of Fife'; it is spoken by Ross, Macduff then enters, and has Ross's speeches. In I.iii Ross's speeches are given to Macduff, and Angus's to Lennox. In I.v the Messenger's speeches are given to Seyton.

From Act II are omitted ii.37-42 ('the ravell'd sleave of care'); ii.142-end (Malcolm and Donalbain decide to which countries to flee); and iv.1-20 (the Old Man's superstitious beliefs). In iii.60-67a Lennox's speech is in its proper place. In iv Lennox has Ross's speeches.

From Act III are omitted i.91b-107 (the simile of the dogs), and v.22-end (the moon's 'vaporous drop'). In III.i Lady Macbeth does not appear; her speech is given to Macbeth. The 3rd Murderer is omitted from III.iii.

Following Act IV.i.43 the Singing Witches are again introduced, from the

1st scene of Davenant's Act IV. In IV.1 Seyton has Lennox's speeches, and 'Show!', 107-9, is restored. IV.ii (Lady Macduff, her son, and Ross) is entirely omitted.

From Act V is omitted vii.64-82 (Siward is told of his son's death). V.v.18-19 is pointed in the conventional manner.

Throughout there are minor omissions, and occasional new readings, for example: I.vii.1-2, 'If it were done, when 'tis done, then 'twere well./ It were done quickly, if the assassination/'; I.vii. 59b, 'If we should fail,--/ We fail.--/'; II.ii.64, 'Making the green--one red.'[16]

Kemble's adaptation of Macbeth was used at Drury Lane in succeeding performances, and when Kemble bought one sixth of Covent Garden Theatre and became the manager there in 1803, he was joined by his sister, Sarah, and they continued to use his version.

Kemble was a responsible actor-manager who took his work seriously and, with the aid of his sister, is credited with the revival of Shakespeare, whose works he kept before the public at Drury Lane and Covent Garden. Although his acting was considered more stiff and less natural than that of his sister, his interpretation of Macbeth had dignity and inspired pity which appealed to the contemporary audience. However, Mrs. Siddons seemed to be more capable than her brother in dealing with the construction of Shakespeare's verse, in a voice that was considered more rich and flexible; Kemble's voice trembled, and his pronunciation was

frequently satirized. Kemble seemed to be the more formal of the two; but, neither could be considered realistic actors imposing complete naturalism on Shakespeare's verse.

Both John Kemble and Sarah Siddons are noted for their long pauses in their speeches. As the years went by, the pauses seemed to grow more frequent and the stage speech of both became slower. This slowing-down is surmised to be caused either from their advancing years or the new structures of Drury Lane and Covent Garden, both of which had been rebuilt on a much larger scale.[17] A third possibility is a change in the demands of the audience.

Sarah Siddons and her brother, John Kemble, performing as Lady Macbeth and Macbeth, formed an unforgettable team. Although Sarah's acting was superior, both are commemorated by cenotaphs in St. Andrew's Chapel in Westminster Abbey.

While a great deal has been written about Mrs. Siddons as Lady Macbeth, all the information derives from comparatively few early sources. The major source is the commentary by Professor George Joseph Bell (1770-1843), who attended performances by Sarah Siddons about 1809 and made extensive annotations in his copy of Macbeth about what he heard and saw in regard to her

acting.[18] Bell was Professor of Scottish Law at the University of Edinburgh.[19] A man of discriminating taste and acute sensibility, his perceptive personal observations provide an interesting eye-witness account of the details of Sarah Siddons' interpretation of Lady Macbeth.

Professor Bell's notes are contained in three volumes labeled "Siddons" which include the acting editions of the plays in which Mrs. Siddons appeared. In addition to his critical remarks, Professor Bell used direct annotations to indicate the rise and fall of Mrs. Siddons' voice.[20]

After Bell's death, his son, Mr. John Bell, placed his father's excellently annotated texts and notes at the disposal of Henry Charles Fleeming Jenkin. Fleeming Jenkin, (1833-1885), Professor of Engineering at the University of Edinburgh, wrote numerous articles dealing with his profession and on a wide variety of other topics. Jenkin was a stage-manager for private theatrical presentations and had great interest in acting and love for plays.[21] His dramatic and literary interest, as well as his natural ability as a critic, is demonstrated in his handling of Bell's notes.

The notes of Professor Bell were presented by Jenkin in a paper, "Mrs. Siddons as Lady Macbeth," which first appeared in 1878 in the monthly review, The Nineteenth Century. The article was later reprinted by

Brander Matthews in Papers on Acting (1915).[22]

In addition to Bell's notes, further information on Sarah Siddons' performances may be found in the following works of two contemporaries: James Boaden's Memoirs of Mrs. Siddons (also entitled Life of Mrs. Siddons) and Thomas Campbell's Life of Mrs. Siddons.

James Boaden (1762-1839), in addition to being a biographer, was a dramatist and journalist. Interested in the theatre, Boaden wrote plays that were well received in the 1790's, and in 1796 demonstrated the spurious aspects of Papers of Shakespeare, published by Samuel Ireland.[23] Boaden later wrote about the lives and performances of well known actors and actresses, including that of his close friend, John Kemble and his sister, Sarah Siddons. Boaden's Life of Kemble (1825) was followed in 1827 by Memoirs of Mrs. Siddons,[24] a commentary on the acting career and performances of Mrs. Siddons based on facts as well as Mr. Boaden's impressions. Boaden includes his remarks based on his actual observations of her performance as Lady Macbeth. His own remarks are interspersed with the comments of other writers, actors, and critics. His details in regard to Mrs. Siddons' gestures, movements, and voice seem to agree with Bell's notes, especially about emphasis on certain words. In some scenes Boaden compares Mrs. Siddons' interpretation to that of other actresses he had

seen in the role, and he offers remarks about costume. Only infrequently does he quote Mrs. Siddons directly.

Thomas Campbell (1777-1844), a poet and unsuccessful editor, was responsible for biographies of Plutarch, Frederick the Great, and Shakespeare.[25] His two volumes on the life of Mrs. Siddons have been criticized for lacking symmetry although they do contain "acute and judicious remarks on several of Shakespeare's plays."[26]

Unlike Boaden, Campbell includes a whole chapter called "Remarks on the Character of Lady Macbeth," which he claims to be the comments of Sarah Siddons quoted directly from her Memoranda which she left. Campbell declares that Mrs. Siddons had shown him these remarks nineteen years previous to his publishing them.[27] He follows this section with one in which he makes observations on Mrs. Siddons' estimate of Lady Macbeth, disagreeing with the view she presented, and basing his comments on his observation of performances.

In her "Remarks on the Character of Lady Macbeth," presented in Campbell's work, Mrs. Siddons described Lady Macbeth as "fair, feminine, nay, perhaps even fragile--"[28] quite unlike her own dark beauty and strength which gave power to her performances. Since her vision of Lady Macbeth, with her fair, feminine, and fragile qualities, seems inaccurate and inappropriate according to the description of Mrs. Siddons left by

observers and critics, her conception gives cause for speculation.

Later in life, it is possible that Mrs. Siddons, was aware of her intimate association with the "fiend-like" queen, and, in retrospect, took a more charitable view of Lady Macbeth in order to make her more socially acceptable and worthy of respect. She then saw Lady Macbeth as "respectable in energy and strength of mind, and captivating in feminine loveliness."[29]

In an age when fragile women were fashionable, it seems that Mrs. Siddons fantastically imagined Macbeth's wife to be a small, fair, and blue-eyed beauty who united physical charm with tremendous intellect and vitality because only such a woman, she wrote, could "seduce him to brave all the danger of the present and all the terrors of the future world."[30] It is also possible that although she held this view of Lady Macbeth, on stage she had presented her as strong and turbulent because, according to Jenkin, "this conception suited her physical powers and appearance."[31]

In opposition to the view Mrs. Siddons presents in her Memoranda, Campbell describes her stage Lady Macbeth as "a splendid picture of evil," depraved, but "majestic and beautiful,"[32] and he commented:

> Mrs. Siddons' idea of her having been a delicate and blonde beauty, seems to me

> to be a pure caprice. The public would have ill exchanged such a representative of Lady Macbeth, for the dark locks and the eagle eyes of Mrs. Siddons.[33]

It is difficult to imagine a frail and feminine beauty raising her voice to scream at the messenger who says the king is coming to visit (I.v.), chiding her husband unmercifully and plotting a gruesome murder (I.vii.), and physically supporting her husband following the assassination (II.ii.).

Although an excellent actress, Mrs. Siddons seems to have been rather weak as a critic and a writer. Her writing, which affects a painfully literary style, leaves much to be desired. In regard to Mrs. Siddons' conception of the role of Lady Macbeth, her niece, Fanny Kemble declared that only in Mrs. Siddons' performance was a true analysis of the part found, and not the faintest idea of the magnificence of her interpretation could possibly be found in her essay on the character.[34]

In regard to Mrs. Siddons' conception of the character, an interesting and inclusive commentary is made by Speaight:

> She imagined the character as a fragile and delicate blonde; subduing Macbeth by the dual exercise of intellect and beauty, moved by the memory of her father and the babe to whom she had 'given suck'; needing all the aid the 'spirits that tend on mortal thoughts'

could give her for the accomplishment of a fearful crime; stronger than Macbeth in one way and weaker in another, since it is she who finally breaks under the burden of remorse. All this she achieved in a legendary performance; only the blonde fragility was beyond her.[35]

Act I. Sc. v.

In the first scene where Lady Macbeth appears, Mrs. Siddons walked on stage, reading Macbeth's letter in a reflective manner, suggesting a continuation of something that had begun previously.[36] Mrs. Siddons' gestures suggested a grand style, but she was neatly and conservatively dressed, not elaborately arrayed as previous actresses had been. In her earlier performances Mrs. Siddons was dressed in austere browns for the first acts of the play; later, in 1803, black became the predominant color of her outfits.[37]

According to Professor Bell, Mrs. Siddons stressed certain words, in regard to the witches, suggesting the supernatural theme. In "they made themselves into air" (I.v.5), she paused before air," which Boaden, her biographer, describes as "a suspension of her voice."[38] Here her voice demonstrated wonder and speculation; but, when she came to ". . . and shalt be/ What thou art promis'd" (I.v.15-16), she emphasized "shalt be" with enthusiastic determination which held the audience spellbound.[39] Her tone was exalted and prophetic as though she could envision the future.[40]

In continuing her soliloquy and in speaking of Macbeth, Mrs. Siddons made it quite clear to her audience, here and in I.vii , that Lady Macbeth is aware of

Macbeth's evil desires and his inability to carry out his ambitious plans. At this point her tone changed from exuberance to doubt as she proceeded to investigate Macbeth's character:[41]

> Yet do I fear thy nature:
> It is too full of the milk of human kindness,
> To catch the nearest way.
>
> (I.v.16-18)

As she continued assaying Macbeth's character, Mrs. Siddons' tone was tinged with contempt:[42]

> Thou wouldst be great;
> Art not without ambition, but without
> The illness should attend it.
>
> (I.v.18-20)

Here the word "illness" was emphasized,[43] and in the lines that followed, Mrs. Siddons made it seem that Lady Macbeth's contempt gave way to "metaphysical speculation" and a "calculated estimate" of the situation.[44]

Demonstrating Lady Macbeth's own "vaulting ambition and intrepid daring,"[45] Mrs. Siddons completed the soliloquy by replacing the contempt and calculation with impatience and a sense of urgency as she said:

> Hie thee hither,
> That I may pour my spirits in thine ear.
>
> (I.v.25-26)

In Dramatic Essays, 1894, Leigh Hunt describes Sarah Siddons' marvelously executed gestures which accompanied her closing lines in the soliloquy:

> Mrs. Siddons used to elevate her stature, to smile with a lofty, uncontrollable expectation, and with an arm raised beautifully in the air, to draw the very circle she was speaking of, in the air about her head, as if she ran her finger round the gold.[46]

Startled by the servant's announcement that the king is coming, in a sudden burst of energy Mrs. Siddons exclaimed loudly, "Thou'rt mad to say to say it," and Boaden comments:

> The actress, fully understanding the process, after the violence of the exclamation, recovered herself with slight alarm, and in a lowered tone proposed a question suited to the new feeling:--
>
> 'Is not thy master with him? who, were't so,
> Would have inform'd for preparation.'[47]

According to Bell, a long pause followed, which prepared the audience for the following soliloquy, and aided Lady Macbeth to make the transition from the dignified mistress of the castle to a creature possessed by evil, who ambitiously wishes to undauntedly pursue a crooked path to power through crime.

In the introductory lines of her next soliloquy, Mrs. Siddons emphasized the word "fatal," suggesting

her evil plans for Duncan.[48] The following lines indicate the idea of the evil spirits which Lady Macbeth invoked, taking possession of her body:[49]

> Come to my woman's breasts,
> And take my milk for gall, you murth'ring
> ministers.
>
> (I.v.44-45)

As she invoked the spirits in a slow, horrid whisper, Mrs. Siddons sent chills up the spines of those in the audience, and an eerie effect was achieved as she spoke:[50]

> Wherever in your sightless substances
> You wait on nature's mischief!
>
> (I.v.49-50)

Mrs. Siddons completed the soliloquy chilling the audience "with horror by the slow hollow whisper" of her voice, and crying "'Hold, hold!'" in a "voice quite supernatural, as in a horrible dream."[51]

Boaden describes her appearance when she came to the above passage:

> The elevation of her brows, the full orbs of sight, the raised shoulders, and the hollowed hands, seemed all to endeavor to explore what yet were pronounced no possible objects of vision. Till then, I am quite sure, a figure so terrible had never bent over the pit of a theatre; that night crowded with intelligence and beauty, in its seven front rows.[52]

In contrast to the harsh whisper employed in her soliloquy, she greeted Macbeth with, "Great Glamis! worthy Cawdor!" (I.v.54) in a manner that was "loud, triumphant, and wild."[53] Following the greeting, however, Mrs. Siddons' voice dropped as she questioned Macbeth about the king's departure: "And when goes hence?" (I.v.58).

To Macbeth's response, "Tomorrow, as he purposes," Mrs. Siddons replied, "with high purpose working in her mind,"[54] and added an extra "never" for emphasis:[55]

> O! never [never]
> Shall sun that morrow see!
>
> (I.v.60-61)

After the first "never," Mrs. Siddons paused at length, and looking away from Macbeth, she continued in a "low, very slow sustained voice,"[56] pronouncing each word with great care while contemplating her purpose. According to Bell, "Her self-collected solemn energy, her fixed posture, her determined eye and full deep voice of fixed resolve . . . cannot be conceived or described."[57]

To her comment Macbeth was said to respond with shock as he carefully searched his wife's face, and she turned her eyes toward him, observing the effect of her words on him, and remarked:[58]

> Your face, my Thane, is as a book, where men
> May read strange matters. To beguile the time,
> Look like the time.
>
> (I.v.62-64)

Continuing her advice, Mrs. Siddons assumed a cruel and severe expression. She used an impressive gesture as she slowly spoke the words:[59]

> look like th' innocent flower,
> But be the serpent under't.
>
> (I.v.64-65)

At the end of this speech, Mrs. Siddons led Macbeth out, "cajoling him, her hand on his shoulder clapping him."[60] Bell did not like this gesture of Mrs. Siddons,[61] as he felt it gave an ignoble conception of Macbeth. Boaden, however, felt that the gesture closed the scene well, showing that Macbeth had sunk beneath Lady Macbeth's power; Mrs. Siddons' interpretation, he thought, was a "triumph of nature."[62]

Act I. Sc. vi.

In regard to I.vii , Mrs. Siddons remarked in her Memoranda that upon his arrival to Inverness, Duncan was greeted by Lady Macbeth, who "flies to welcome the venerable gracious Duncan, with such a show of eagerness, as if allegiance in her bosom sat crowned with devotion and gratitude."[63] The stage direction found in Bell's notes describes Lady Macbeth bowing to her king and "smiling sweetly to the nobles,"[64] never giving a hint of deception.

Mrs. Siddons wore a heavy black robe with a broad border of bright crimson. A white underskirt flowed out into a long train, and her high waist was marked by a silver girdle. Crimson bordered her sleeves, and she wore red coral bracelets and necklace. A veil of white cambric flowed from her headress.[65]

She appeared simple yet dignified; her voice was pleasant, and her words were beautifully enunciated. Bell found her voice musical in tone and her pronunciation "soothing and satisfying" to his ears.[66] Of her performance in this scene, Boaden says:

> The honored hostess received his Majesty with all the exterior of profound obligation. She was too pure an actress to allow a glance of triumph to stray toward the spectators.[67]

Act I. Sc. vii.

Appearing again directly after Macbeth completes the soliloquy in which he changes his plans, Sarah Siddons completely dominated this scene. When Macbeth asked, "Hath he asked for me?" Sarah Siddons, with surprise and anger, irately whispered, "Know you not he has?"[68] (I.vii.29-30).

When Macbeth expresses his change of mind about committing the crime, Lady Macbeth's silence demonstrated the transition from hope to "disappointment, depression, contempt, and rekindling resentment"[69] that Bell believed was beyond the power of any actress, except Sarah Siddons, to express.

At this point Sarah Siddons became distant, cold, and contemptuous and revealed another aspect of Lady Macbeth's character.[70] Using ridicule and mockery, she broke down Macbeth's spirit with her taunts, and proceeded to complete her plan by appealing to his sense of loyalty and affection. Knowing all the wiles to take possession of Macbeth's mind and emotions, she completely dominated him, in her desire to help him achieve his ambitious hopes.[71] The change in her manner became evident as she came close to Macbeth and told him:[72]

> I have given suck, and know
> How tender 'tis to love the babe that milks me:
> I would, while it was smiling in my face,

> Have pluck'd my nipple from his boneless gums,
> And dash'd the brains out, had I so sworn
> As you have done to this.
>
> (I.vii.54-59)

Mrs. Siddons said that although Lady Macbeth had earlier invoked the evil powers to unsex her, in this scene she used language expressing "the instinct of filial as well as maternal love"[73] to taunt and to appeal to her husband.

As Sarah Siddons gave these lines, she spoke of motherhood and the murdered babe in a soft and tender manner after gazing into his face for some time.[74] She built up to a crescendo, with appalling energy, in regard to his promise, and in this scene appeared as both savage and feminine.

When Macbeth questions, "If we should fail?" (I.vii.59), Mrs. Siddons retorted, "We fail!" (I.vii.60) with emphasis on "fail."[75] Sarah Siddons spent some time before she was satisfied with this scene and her reply, "We fail!" Her predecessor, Mrs. Pritchard, had made her reply a question, "We fail?" However, this interpretation did not satisfy Mrs. Siddons, who felt the line should suggest fatalism and resignation.[76]

When Bell observed Mrs. Siddons, she spoke the lines not with surprise but with a "downward inflection, bowing with her hands down, the palms upward."[77] In this reaction her stoic courage and strength of will were

apparent. However with determination to carry out the plan, she followed the line with a more assured tone to encourage Macbeth:

> But screw your courage to the sticking-place,
> And we'll not fail.
>
> (I.vii.61-62)

With increased self-confidence, Sarah Siddons moved close to Macbeth and revealed her plans. In doing so, she spoke in a low, whispering tone and in an earnest manner, pausing to watch the effect her details had on Macbeth. She completed the scene with confidence and an air of dignity and pride in her clever plans.[78] In displaying the expressions of contempt, affection, and reason, Sarah Siddons demonstrated the complexities of Lady Macbeth as well as her own acting talents.[79]

Act II. Sc. ii.

In II.ii , Lady Macbeth awaits Macbeth's completion of the bloody deed. Sarah Siddons bent toward the door as if listening, with a ghastly smile upon her face.

According to J. H. Siddons, who watched from back stage where John Kemble was applying "blood" to his hands, Mrs. Siddons at the time was on stage listening and speaking. "The words, I have said, were whispered -- but what a whisper was hers! Distinctly audible in every part of the house, it served a purpose of the loudest tones."[80]

Bell also reports that Mrs. Siddons spoke in a horrible whisper and seemed to breathe with difficulty. Thinking the grooms may have awakened, she tossed her arms in agony and uncertainty.[81] The illusion of a crime being committed was created by her whole vivid and detailed acting process.[82] Her interpretation was subtle and varied in this scene as she demonstrated the complexities of Lady Macbeth.

Tenderness was revealed in her reference to Duncan and Lady Macbeth's inability to commit the murder:

> Had he not resembled
> My father as he slept, I had done't.
>
> (II.ii.12-13)

No sooner had Sarah Siddons uttered these words

than Macbeth burst into the room, and she greeted him with apprehension, "My husband!" (II.ii.13). Concealing her own tenderness and concern, she bolstered his spirit by appearing practical and of inhuman strength as she replied to Macbeth, "a foolish thought to say a sorry sight" (II.ii.21), while he stood staring at his bloody hands, considering the horror of his deed.

As Macbeth described the murder scene and the muttering of the guards, Mrs. Siddons, filled with remorse and terror, clasped her arms around her neck and bosom and stood shuddering[83] until she noticed the gory daggers in his hands.

Acting with urgency and courage, she snatched the daggers from Macbeth, when he refused to return them to the scene of the crime.[84] With contempt in her voice, she said, "Give me the daggers" (II.ii.53). She started toward the door, then turning, pointed a finger at Macbeth and said with malevolence:[85]

> If he do bleed,
> I'll gild the faces of the grooms withal,
> For it must seem their guilt.
>
> (II.ii.55-57)

Upon returning from Duncan's chamber, Mrs. Siddons directed Macbeth with an air of assurance and confidence.[86] Although she wanted to appear calm and confident to Macbeth despite the knocking at the south entry,

Mrs. Siddons' skillful acting suggested that Lady Macbeth was really agonized by Macbeth's behavior and alarmed that his lack of reason would lead to their being discovered. Forcing herself to remain calm, she suggested in a practical manner that they retire to their chamber and wash up:

> --retire we to our chamber.
> A little water clears us of this deed:
> How easy is it then!
>
> (II.ii.65-67)

Macbeth appeared lost in his thoughts, and as the knocking continued, Mrs. Siddons struck him on the shoulder and pulling him from his fixed position, energetically forced him from the stage so they would not be discovered.[87]

Mrs. Siddons, like Mrs. Pritchard, did not appear in III.i, where Duncan's body is discovered. When she appeared again it was in III.ii, and her unhappiness and regret were evident in the solemn lines she expressed to the audience in her brief soliloquy:

> Nought's had, all's spent,
> Where our desire is got without content;
> 'Tis safer to be that which we destroy,
> Than by destruction dwell in doubtful joy.
>
> (III.ii.4-7)

Bell said that although her voice demonstrated dignity, there was no joy in it, and the above lines were said in an extremely mournful manner.[88] Mrs. Siddons, herself, said that Lady Macbeth in this scene was "no longer the presumptuous, the determined creature, that she was before the assassination of the King."[89]

Mrs. Siddons' acting supported her view as she greeted the entrance of Macbeth with a forced cheerfulness and responded to him with tenderness and sympathy. Mrs. Siddons believed that in this scene Lady Macbeth participated in Macbeth's misery and realized the torment that Macbeth was suffering. Although she concealed her feelings from Macbeth, she also suffered from the frightful experience. She appeared "cordial, bright, and jovial,"[90] but a melancholy tone was in evidence.

Act III. Sc. iv.

Sarah Siddons was scintillating in the banquet scene (III.iv) as she moved among her guests, with her bright eyes sparkling and piercing as she descended from her throne. Her robe was of black with gold trim around the neck, sleeves, and hem, and five broad bands of gold adorned the front of her skirt. Again the girdle was of silver. Her necklace was of pearls, and upon her head she wore a silver tiara and coronet from which flowed a gauze veil. In time, after 1805, this headpiece was replaced by a long gauze veil which she draped about her, and the tiara and coronet were replaced by a gold crown.[91]

During this scene, Sarah Siddons had Lady Macbeth overact in order to appear as a gracious hostess "with frightful smiles, with over-acted attention, and with fitful graciousness; painfully, yet incessantly, laboring to divert their attention from her husband."[92] Although agitated by her husband's actions and words, she labored ceaselessly to keep up appearances in front of the guests.[93]

Mrs. Siddons believed that Lady Macbeth was aware of Banquo's fate from the intimations in Macbeth's words earlier in the day, and that the last appearance of Banquo's ghost at the banquet was seen by Lady Macbeth as well as Macbeth.[94] Therefore, in addition to her

desire to divert the guests' attention from her husband, she was also agonized and terrified as she observed the appearance of the ghost. Mrs. Siddons wrote that in this scene, Lady Macbeth assumed "the utmost composure" although "dying with fear."[95]

Bell comments on the variety of expressions and actions on Mrs. Siddons' part in this scene. She was peevish and scornful of Macbeth, but as she attempted to make him behave, her anxiety made the audience breathless. Her agony and apprehension were evident although she spoke sweetly to the company, attempting to maintain her composure.[96]

When Mrs. Siddons finally dismissed all the guests with a hurried, apprehensive, but grateful manner, the audience rewarded her skillful and vigorous performance with a thundering applause.[97] Her acting reached a peak of perfection in this scene. By combining gestures, facial expressions, and movements with her vocal ability, Sarah Siddons thoroughly fascinated her audience.

After the guests departed and Macbeth questioned, "What is the night?" Sarah Siddons replied "Almost at odds with morning, which is which" (III.iv.126), displaying sorrow and fatigue. In demonstrating concern about her husband's condition and feebly telling him he lacks sleep, Mrs. Siddons gave the impression that she too was thoroughly exhausted and in need of the restora-

tive powers of sleep.[98] Sorrowful and exhausted, Sarah Siddons prepared the audience for the mental collapse and self-destruction of Lady Macbeth.[99]

In the sleep-walking scene, Mrs. Siddons entered wearing a shroud-like garment and carrying a candle which she set upon a table before rubbing her hands together. This gesture had at first disturbed Mr. Sheridan, according to Mrs. Siddons' Remarks in her Memoranda.[100]

On the evening of the opening performance of Macbeth, February 2, 1785, Sarah Siddons, who made a habit of being alone to concentrate on her lines prior to her appearance on stage, was sitting alone in her dressing room. Mr. Sheridan knocked on the door and insisted on being admitted. Sarah, not wishing to get out of character, was annoyed with Sheridan's interuption, but he insisted upon speaking with her about a serious problem that concerned him.

He had heard that Sarah had planned to set her candle down in the sleep-walking scene, an action which had not been done by Mrs. Pritchard or any previous actress in the sleep-walking scene. Mrs. Siddons argued that she planned to pretend to wash her hands in the scene and needed to set down the candle in order to carry out the action in a credible and effective manner. Mr. Sheridan argued that the alteration would not be acceptable to the public; however, Mrs. Siddons said she had observed a somnambulist and had made up her mind;

also, she had practiced the part this way and it was then too late to change.[101]

The scene, as Sarah Siddons hoped, received approval, and Mr. Sheridan later commended her. As Mrs. Siddons expressed it, "Mr. Sheridan himself came to me, after the play, and most ingenuously congratulated me on my obstinacy."[102]

On that same hectic evening, after Mr. Sheridan had departed from her dressing-room, being concerned about achieving the suitable tone and action, Sarah Siddons repeated the words, "Here's the smell of blood still!" (V.i.48). So incredibly realistic was her acting, her wardrobe dresser naively exclaimed, "Dear me, ma'am, how very hysterical you are tonight; I protest and vow, ma'am it was not blood, but rose-pink and water; for I saw the property-man mix it up with my own eyes."[103]

Mrs. Siddons' interpretation of the famous sleep-walking scene differed from earlier actresses' performances due partly to her tremendous vigor and energy of her movements. She made a rapid entrance, walking to the table on which she set the candle that she carried.[104] Bell's notes indicate that he felt her movements were too rapid; he thought she should glide in with a slow and hesitant pace; however, Mrs. Siddons moved about restlessly, rubbing her hand, and seeming to scoop water over her hand and scrub it with urgency, while staring

with a blank, glazed expression.[105]

After she washed her hand and failed to remove the stain, Sarah Siddons grimaced as though she had perceived a foul odor. She then appeared to be listening anxiously and attentively, as on the night of Duncan's murder, as she said, "One; two: why then 'tis time to do't." (V.i.34-35) in the hollow, tortured tones of an unnatural whisper.[106]

According to Boaden, Mrs. Siddons acted as though she were reliving the night of Duncan's murder, first listening as she had, then chiding him, helping him to his chamber,[107] and finally commenting in regard to the king: "Yet who would have thought the old man to have had so much blood in him?" (V.i.38-39)

As she considered the fate of Lady Macduff, Mrs. Siddons' strange whisper assumed a melancholy tone as she said, "The thane of Fife had a wife: where is she now?" (V.i.41), and with what Bell calls, "melancholy peevishness,"[108] she washed her hands saying, "What, will these hands ne'er be clean?" (V.i.42)

Depicting a Lady Macbeth, completely broken in spirit, Sarah Siddons uttered her final line with a horrible sound that seemed to be more of a shudder than a sigh.[109] According to Bell, the groaning sounds she made at the end of this speech hinted of imbecility and indicated her mental collapse:[110]

> Here's the smell of the blood still: all the Perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten this little hand. Oh! oh! oh!
>
> (V.1.48-50)

Sheridan Knowles described his reaction to seeing Mrs. Siddons in the sleep-walking scene in answer to the request of Edwin Forrest, the American tragedian who asked Knowles what impression Sarah Siddons had produced on him. Knowles replied with a shudder, "Well, sir, I smelt blood! I swear I smelt blood!"[111]

Following one of her performances, a member of the audience who had observed Mrs. Siddons loudly exclaimed, "She's a fallen angel!" Speaight comments that the man said "more in five words than many dramatic critics had said in fifty."[112]

Chapter III

Most actresses who followed Sarah Siddons were overshadowed by her Lady Macbeth. New conceptions were attempted by a number of actresses over the years, but no actress could achieve the complexity or grandeur of Mrs. Siddons. Her indefinable qualities could not be equalled or successfully imitated.

In 1847, George Fletcher wrote that even the most worthy efforts since Sarah Siddons' time "had never amounted to anything beyond a vastly inferior expression of Mrs. Siddons' conception of the character, to which the stage, as well as the audience, were accustomed to bow with a sort of religious faith and awe."[1]

In 1835, William Macready first played Macbeth; in his long career many Lady Macbeths played opposite him, among those who are best remembered are Mrs. Warner, Charlotte Cushman, and Helen Faucit.

Mrs. Warner and Charlotte Cushman both used Mrs. Siddons' interpretation of Lady Macbeth; although Mrs. Warner had the grandeur of Sarah Siddons, she lacked the variety in expression and tone to communicate the different emotions as Mrs. Siddons had,[2] and despite the fact that Miss Cushman's powerful performance demonstrated the influence of Mrs. Siddons' interpretation, it had a gloom-filled monotony about it, lacking Mrs.

Siddons' variety.[3]

Helen Faucit was not influenced by Mrs. Siddons' stage portrayal, it seems, but by her essay describing Lady Macbeth as beautiful and delicate. Helen Faucit built her whole interpretation on an essentially feminine and domestic conception.[4]

Fanny Kemble, Mrs. Siddons' niece, who also played opposite Macready in a rather unsuccessful interpretation, characterized Lady Macbeth as unscrupulous and lacking in imagination. Miss Kemble lacked Mrs. Siddons' sensitiveness to understand Lady Macbeth's character, and saw only the evil and moral aspects in an unimaginative manner.[5]

More successful was Mrs. Charles Kean, the former Ellen Tree, who played the role in 1835 in a style similar to that of Helen Faucit, demonstrating gentle femininity and tragic remorse; however, in 1853 Mrs. Kean created a new character, combining terror with grandeur. She was fierce and intense in the early scenes, calm and dignified later, and finally tragic. Mrs. Kean's 1853 performance seems to come closer to Mrs. Siddons' variety then the performances of other actresses.[6]

In 1850, Isabella Glyn, a pupil of Charles Kemble, performed quite successfully as Lady Macbeth opposite Samuel Phelps. Isabella Glyn had been taught in the

Siddonian tradition and had tremendous energy and overwhelming vigor, giving an intellectual power to the role. Her first soliloquy, as well as other scenes, demonstrated Mrs. Siddons' influence, although her interpretation differed somewhat from that of Mrs. Siddons.[7]

Despite her strength, Isabella Glyn did not reduce the character of Macbeth as Madame Ristoré did at the Lyceum in 1857. Madame Ristoré's interpretation was so forceful and vigorous that she overpowered Macbeth and extinguished him, while she maintained her grandeur.[8]

In 1888 Ellen Terry, playing opposite Henry Irving, used an interpretation of Lady Macbeth, influenced by Helen Faucit, that was domestic and practical.[9]

Unlike the dusky brown and black costumes worn by Mrs. Siddons, Ellen Terry's exotic costumes were peacock green and claret trimmed with gold; she changed for nearly every scene.[10]

More like Mrs. Siddons than Helen Faucit in the banquet scene, Ellen Terry acted in a perfunctory rather than comforting manner toward Macbeth. Her sleep-walking scene was excellent; she was strained and tragic and projected an air of realism.[11]

In contrast, Sarah Bernhardt's sleep-walking scene was hysterical and wild when she played at the Gaiety Theatre on July 4, 1884. She played on Macbeth's senses rather than to his reason earlier in the play; when she

whispered her plans in his ear, she held him in a clinging embrace. Her interpretation rather than being serious was sensational and rather melodramatic.[12]

In 1895, Lillah McCarthy, under the direction of William Poel, performed as Lady Macbeth in a production by the Shakespeare Reading Society at St. George's Hall. Poel used Mrs. Siddons' written description that Lady Macbeth was -- fair, feminine, and fragile as the basis for his interpretation. He saw Lady Macbeth as a 35 year old woman with red hair, eyelids painted green with flecks of gold beneath her eyes, and white skin tinted pale blue. He believed she was a shallow materialist, lacking in imagination;[13] needless to say his conception was quite different from Mrs. Siddons' interpretation.

At the Old Vic in 1926 Sybil Thorndike invoked the spirits in a horrible whisper as Mrs. Siddons had done. Also like Mrs. Siddons she evoked horror and pity, appearing natural and majestic. Her sleep-walking scene was varied, with a sigh that depicted agony.[14]

A more recent actress who has achieved some fame in her performance as Lady Macbeth is Judith Anderson. In 1937, she appeared opposite Laurence Olivier at the Old Vic. Although not convincing in the first act, Miss Anderson became more persuasive in the later acts, gaining depth as the play proceeded. She was forceful,

if not fascinating, as "a fiend-like queen,"[15] but her performance, like Olivier's, was criticized as being forced and strained,[16] and a number of personal disasters occurred in the ill-fated production.[17] Quite different was the result of her later performance in the United States. On November 11, 1941, Judith Anderson opened with Maurice Evans in the Broadway production of Macbeth, directed by Margaret Webster, who had at one time played the role of Lady Macbeth herself.[18]

Brooks Atkinson praised her performance, the following day, in the New York Times;

> Miss Anderson's Lady Macbeth is her most distinguished work in our theatre. It has a sculptured beauty in the early scenes, and a resolution that seems to be fiercer than the body that contains it. It is strong without being inhuman. And she has translated the sleep-walking scene with something memorable; the nervous washing of the hands is almost too frightening to be watched.[19]

Judith Anderson's interpretation of Lady Macbeth is reminiscent of the complexity and variety of Sarah Siddons, who made the part famous. Miss Anderson was both a fiend and a tragic figure. According to Atkinson her part began "with a kind of lonely stature when she is meditating within herself and it rises to haggard, haunted loneliness in the sleep-walking scene."[20] Judith Anderson's sleep-walking scene was considered a great masterpiece, and like that of Sarah Siddons, her

performance of Lady Macbeth was artistic and creative acting.[21]

It is impossible to judge the amount of influence Sarah Siddons has had on later actresses; but her insights into the character of Lady Macbeth, based on her performance, in addition to the individual interpretations of other actresses who performed the role prove relevant and valuable to the study of Macbeth.

Notes - Chapter I

[1]Forman's notes are reprinted in E. K. Chambers, William Shakespeare a Study of Facts and Problems (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1930; reprinted 1963), pp. 337-338.

[2]Dennis Bartholomeusz, Macbeth and the Players (Cambridge: University Press, 1969), pp. 10-11, citing T. W. Baldwin. The Organization and Personnel of the Shakespearean Company (Princeton, 1927), p. 227 and Athenaeum (May 19, 1888), p. 641.

[3]The Diary of Samuel Pepys, 1661, edited by Robert Latham and William Matthews (London: G. Bell and Sons, 1970) II, 5.

[4]William D'Avenant, The Dramatic Works of William D'Avenant (Edinburgh: William Paterson, 1874), V, 343.

[5]D'Avenant, V, 377-379.

[6]Pepys, p. 47. Frequent references to Thomas Betterton in the diary entries indicate that he was Pepys' favorite actor, for whom Pepys named his dog.

[7]Colley Cibber, An Apology for the Life of Colley Cibber (1740) edited by B. R. S. Fone (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1968), p. 93.

[8]Cibber, p. 337, (n. 38).

[9]Cibber, p. 93.

[10]Ibid.

[11]Cibber, p. 92.

[12]Robert Speaight Shakespeare on Stage (Boston: Little, Brown, 1973), p. 28, citing A. M. Taylor, Next to Shakespeare (London, 1950).

[13]Ibid.

[14]Cibber, p. 92.

[15]Bartholomeusz, p. 30.

[16]Bartholomeusz, p. 36.

[17]Bartholomeusz, p. 37, citing Davies, Dramatic Miscellanies (Dublin, 1784) III, 464.

[18]Bartholomeusz, p. 37, citing William Cooke, Memoirs of Charles Macklin, Comedian (1804), p. 26.

[19]Bartholomeusz, p. 39.

[20]For Garrick's version see [John] Bell's Edition of Shakespeare's Plays As Performed at the Theatres Royal of London (1774), I. (Reprinted London: Cornmarket Press, 1969).

[21]George C. Branam, Eighteenth-Century Adaptations (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1956), p. 59.

[22]Bartholomeusz, pp. 44-45, citing Thomas Davies, Memoirs of the Life of David Garrick, Esq., 2 vols., (1780), I, 44.

[23]Speaight, p. 32.

[24]Bartholomeusz, p. 69, quoting Davies, Dramatic Miscellanies (Dublin, 1784) II, 166.

[25]Bartholomeusz, p. 79.

[26]Bartholomeusz, p. 64.

[27]Speaight, p. 32.

[28]John Genest, Some Account of the English Stage, 1660 to 1830 (10 vols. 1832), V, 173, as quoted by Bartholomeusz, p. 49.

[29]Bartholomeusz, p. 79.

[30]Yvonne Ffrench, Mrs. Siddons: Tragic Actress (London: Cobden-Sanderson, 1936), p. 132.

Notes - Chapter II

[1]Sources providing general biographical information throughout this section, unless otherwise noted, are:

James Boaden, Memoirs of Mrs. Siddons (London: Henry Colburn and Richard Bentley, 1831), 2 vols.

Thomas Campbell, Life of Mrs. Siddons (London: Effingham Wilson, 1834), 2 vols.

Yvonne Ffrench, Mrs. Siddons: Tragic Actress (London: Cobden-Sanderson, 1936).

Naomi Royde-Smith Portrait of Mrs. Siddons (New York: The Viking Press, 1933).

[2]Campbell, II, 34-35.

[3]Campbell, II, 36.

[4]Quoted by Robert Speaight, Shakespeare on the Stage (Boston: Little, Brown, 1973), p. 40.

[5]Campbell, II, 10.

[6]Dictionary of National Biography, p. 199.

[7]Dictionary of National Biography, p. 200.

[8]Matthews, Brander, ed., Papers on Acting (1915; reprinted in New York: Hill and Wang, 1958), p. 81.

[9]Ibid.

[10]Dennis Bartholomeusz, Macbeth and the Players (Cambridge: University Press, 1969), p. 122.

[11]George C. D. Odell, Shakespeare from Betterton to Irving (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1920), II, 45.

[12]Ibid.

[13]Matthews, p. 79.

[14]Charles Beecher Hogan, Shakespeare in the Theatre 1701-1800 (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1957), p. 363.

[15]Hogan, p. 362.

[16]Hogan, p. 363.

[17]Bartholomeusz, p. 140.

[18]Matthews, pp. 79-96.

[19]There is some confusion about the identity of Professor G. E. Bell, whom Bartholomeusz inaccurately refers to as Professor John Bell in Macbeth and the Players, pp. 103, 104. It is possible that Bartholomeusz has confused Professor Bell with John Bell, 1745-1831, book-seller and publisher of Shakespeare texts and other works, or with G. E. Bell's son, Mr. John Bell, a lawyer. See Dictionary of National Biography, 158, 168-169.

[20]Matthews, p. 79.

[21]Matthews, pp. 71-74.

[22]I have used the recent paperback book reprint by Hill and Wang (1958).

[23]Dictionary of National Biography, pp. 740-741.

[24]Dictionary of National Biography, p. 741.

[25]Dictionary of National Biography, pp. 844-848.

[26]Dictionary of National Biography, p. 848.

[27]Campbell, II, 44.

[28]Campbell, II, 11.

[29]Ibid.

[30]Ibid.

[31]Matthews, p. 80.

[32]Campbell, II, 35.

[33]Ibid.

[34]Matthews, p. 70.

[35]Speaight, p. 41.

[36]Ffrench, p. 133.

[37]Bartholomeusz, p. 118.

[38]Boaden, II, 133. All references are to the New Arden Edition by Kenneth Muis (London: Methuen, 1959).

[39]Boaden, II, 133.

[40]Matthews, p. 82.

[41]Campbell, II, 14.

[42]Matthews, p. 82.

[43]Ibid.

[44]Boaden, II, 134.

[45]Campbell, II, 14.

[46]As cited in Arthur Colby Sprague, Shakespeare and the Actors (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1944), p. 232.

[47]Boaden, II, 134-135.

[48]Matthews, p. 83.

[49]According to Sprague, pp. 232-233, when Mrs. Siddons invoked the spirits, she crossed her hands upon her bosom and stared upward as if indicating the evil spirits pervaded the air. Later actresses including Madame Ristoré and Mrs. Charles Kean, used similar

gestures, but Charlotte Cushman gazed about wildly as if searching everywhere for the spirits.

[50]Matthews, p. 83.

[51]Ibid.

[52]Boaden, p. 135.

[53]Matthews, p. 83. How Mrs. Siddons embraced Macbeth is not indicated. A prompt book from 1860 has Lady Macbeth cross to right and place her hands upon his shoulders. Dame Madge Kendall, playing the role at Sadler's Wells, with Samuel Phelps, surprised him by dropping to her knees and prostrating herself before him as she thought a subject would do "in the presence of his sovereign." (Sprague, p. 233.)

[54]Matthews, p. 83.

[55]Ibid.

[56]Ibid.

[57]Ibid.

[58]Matthews, p. 84.

[59]Ibid.

[60]Ibid.

[61]In an 1857 performance, Madame Ristoré also placed her hands on Macbeth, suggesting her compelling force, as she smiled in a seductively persuasive manner, implying satisfaction that she had cajoled Macbeth and had him in her power. (Sprague, p. 234, citing Henry Morley, The Journal of a London Playgoer (July 25, 1857), p. 159).

[62]Boaden, II, 136.

[63]Campbell, II, 16.

[64]Matthews, p. 84.

[65]C. Ralph Taylor, ed., Shakespeare's Macbeth (Chicago: Laurel, 1930) p. 50.

[66]Matthews, p. 84.

[67]Boaden, II, 136.

[68]Matthews, p. 85.

[69]Ibid.

[70]Matthews, p. 86.

[71]Campbell, II, 17-18.

[72]Matthews, p. 86.

[73]Campbell, II, 18.

[74]Matthews, p. 86.

[75]Ibid.

[76]Ffrench, p. 134.

[77]Matthews, p. 86.

[78]Matthews, pp. 86-87.

[79]In playing the role in 1880, Madame Modjeska presented Macbeth with one of his letters as evidence that he had sworn to kill Duncan. By this time a different style of acting from that of Mrs. Siddons and Kemble was in vogue, and in 1889 Mrs. Langtry was praised for the way "she crept into Macbeth's arms while whispering to him her plans for the assassination" in a cleaver little way that thrilled the audience. (Sprague, p. 236).

[80]Arthur Colby Sprague, Shakespearian Players and Performances (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1953), p. 62, quoting Memoirs of a Journalist (1873), p. 17.

[81]Matthews, p. 88.

[82]Bartholomeusz, p. 112.

[83]Matthews, p. 89.

[84]Campbell, II, 20.

[85]Matthews, p. 90.

[86]Matthews, p. 91.

[87]Ibid.

[88]Ibid.

[89]Campbell, II, 22.

[90]Campbell, II, 24.

[91]Taylor, p. 50.

[92]Campbell, II, 27.

[93]Other actresses played the scene differently. Madame Ristoré sat at the table drinking wine; she carried the cup in her hand during most of the scene, suggesting dependence on the wine here as on the night of Duncan's murder when she needed to drink for courage. Madame Janauschek drew Macbeth to her bosom, sheltering his vision from the ghost, while she faced the audience with looks of pity and despair. Another variation, suggested by the William Warren Edition, was that Lady Macbeth may have tried to distract her guests from Macbeth by walking in front of the table and pouring the wine.

When Macready played Macbeth at the Haymarket, October 8, 1849, during the confusion caused by Macbeth's

behavior, Lady Macbeth was confronted by the Physician, whose gestures indicated he was giving a medical opinion on the sanity of Macbeth, (Sprague, pp. 263-264).

[94]Campbell, II, 28-31.

[95]Campbell, II, 27.

[96]Matthews, pp. 93-94.

[97]Boaden, II, 142.

[98]Matthews, p. 95.

[99]Sprague, p. 264, citing "Helen Faucit," Blackwood's Magazine, December 1885; c.f. Theodore Martin, Helena Faucit, 313, 314, mentions that after bowing to her last guest, unlike Sarah Siddons, who directed Macbeth, Helen Faucit appeared to grow faint. Staggering to the table, she sat down, placing her forehead on her hand, touching her crown with despair. Like Sarah Siddons, Madame Ristoré also supported Macbeth, but in controlling him in a forceful manner, she nearly pushed him off the stage.

[100]Campbell, II, 37.

[101]Campbell, II, 38.

[102]Campbell, II, 39.

[103] *Ibid.*

[104] Boaden, II, 143.

[105] Matthews, p. 95.

[106] Matthews, p. 96.

[107] Boaden, II, 145.

[108] Matthews, p. 96.

[109] Ffrench, p. 136.

[110] Matthews, p. 96.

[111] Sprague, *Shakespearian Players*, p. 67, citing W. R. Alger, *The Life of Edwin Forrest* (1877), II, 545.

[112] Speaight, p. 41.

Notes - Chapter III

[1]George Fletcher, Studies of Shakespeare (1847), p. 96, quoted by Dennis Bartholomeusz, Macbeth and the Players, (Cambridge: University Press, 1969), p. 170.

[2]John Westland Marston, Our Recent Actors I, 277 cited by Bartholomeusz, p. 171.

[3]Arthur Colby Sprague, Shakespeare and the Actors (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1944), p. 232.

[4]Bartholomeusz, p. 173. See Thomas Campbell, Life of Mrs. Siddons (London: Effingham Wilson, 1834), II, 10-11, for Mrs. Siddons "Remarks on the Character of Lady Macbeth."

[5]Fanny Kemble, Notes upon some of Shakespeare's Plays (1882), pp. 50-7, as cited by Bartholomeusz, p. 177.

[6]Theatrical Examiner (October 4, 1835) cited by Bartholomeusz, pp. 184-185.

[7]Illustrated London News, XVI (March 23, 1850), 194, cited by Bartholomeusz, p. 188.

[8]Henry Morley, Journal of a London Playgoer (1866), p. 186, cited by Bartholomeusz, p. 190.

[9]Liverpool Daily Post (December 31, 1888), cited

by Bartholomeusz, p. 200.

[10] *Ibid.*, pp. 200-201.

[11] Bartholomeusz, pp. 205-207, citing *Memoirs*, edited by Edith Craig and C. St. John (1933), p. 233.

[12] Bartholomeusz, pp. 208-209, citing *The Times* (July 4, 1884).

[13] Robert Speaight, *William Poel and the Elizabethan Revival* (1954), cited by Bartholomeusz, pp. 222-223.

[14] Bartholomeusz, p. 227, citing *The Times* (December 24, 1926).

[15] "New Theatre," *The Times* (London), December 28, 1937, p. 10.

[16] "Old Vic," *The Times* (London), November 27, 1937, p. 10.

[17] Bartholomeusz, p. 245.

[18] Margaret Webster performed the role of Lady Macbeth in Edward Carrick's 1932 production at the Old Vic.

[19] Brooks Atkinson, "The Play," *The New York Times*, November 12, 1941, p. 30, col. 2.

[20] Brooks Atkinson, "Assassin of the King," *The New*

York Times, November 23, 1941, Sec. 9, p. 1, col. 1.

[21] Ibid.

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